



Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission

NEWS RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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Northern Shrimp Section Increases the 2001 Season to 83 Days; *Anticipates Completion of Plan Amendment by late 2001*

Danvers, MA — The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Northern Shrimp Section yesterday approved an 83-day fishing season for the 2001 northern shrimp fishery, a 32-day increase from last year's season. The action was based upon the recommendations of both the Commission's Northern Shrimp Advisory Panel and Technical Committee. In addition, the Section reiterated its commitment to aggressively pursue development of an amendment to the fishery management plan (FMP), which will provide the Section additional tools to manage this resource.

"I am pleased that the Section was able to increase the season this year, and provide the fishermen and the processors with what they need to have a successful season," stated Section Chair, Senator Jill Goldthwait from Maine. "The results of the most recent northern shrimp trawl survey show an improvement in the resource from last year. All the important indicators – abundance, recruitment, and harvestable biomass – are up." Goldthwait also noted, however, "that the Section is concerned about the abnormally high catch rates observed last year. If that situation persists further reductions in future years may be required."

Based on the recommendations of industry advisors, the fishing season will be in two periods – January 9, 2001 to March 17, 2001, and April 16 - 30, 2001. The Section also elected to allow fishing on every day of the week instead of requiring "no-fishing days" during the season. The season is the same for mobile and trap gear.

In other business, the Section began to identify the issues and options to be contained in the first draft of the amendment to the FMP. The amendment, which is slated to be completed in 2001, will define long-term goals and objectives for the fishery. Throughout the plan development process, the public will be given ample opportunity to provide its input and advice on the future of northern shrimp management. The primary goal of the amendment will be to provide more management options to regulate and guide the recovery of this species, while also taking into consideration the historical participation and importance of this fishery.

The northern shrimp fishery is jointly regulated by the States of Maine and New Hampshire, and the Commonwealth of Massachusetts through the Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission's Northern Shrimp Section. The cooperative management program has been in place since 1972 and is currently managed under the 1986 FMP.

For more information, please contact Dieter Busch, Director, Interstate Fisheries Management Program, at (202)289-6400, ext. 316.

The Atlantic States Marine Fisheries Commission (Commission) was formed by the 15 Atlantic coastal states in 1942 for the promotion and protection of coastal fishery resources. The Commission serves as a deliberative body of the Atlantic coastal states, coordinating the conservation and management of nearshore fishery resources, including marine, shell and anadromous species.

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Development of Amendment 1, which is the first rewrite of the existing Atlantic Menhaden FMP since 1992, was undertaken for two major reasons. The first being concern that the Atlantic coastal population of Atlantic menhaden is in decline and that the management strategies set forth in the current plan may not adequately address declines in the population. The other reason stems from the Management Board's desire to bring the FMP up to speed with the mandates of the Atlantic Coastal Fisheries Conservation and Management Act, which requires Commission FMPs to contain provisions for alternative state management, de minimis guidelines, adaptive management guidelines and mandatory compliance criteria.

One of the key provisions in Amendment 1 is a new overfishing definition that will be used as a benchmark for developing future management measures. The new overfishing definition employs a target and threshold approach for assessing the status of the population. A target fishing mortality ($F = 1.0$) and a target spawning stock biomass ($SSB = 37,400$ metric tons) are proposed in Amendment 1 along with threshold levels for each. The fishing mortality threshold level ($F = 1.4$) is a maximum level that should not be exceeded, while the SSB threshold (20,570 mt) is the minimum level of SSB that the population should not fall below. Currently, F is estimated at approximately 1.0, but has in the past greatly exceeded the proposed target. The coastwide SSB is currently slightly below the proposed target. Future management efforts will be developed to maintain F rates at or below the target and SSB at or above the target.

In addition to the new overfishing definition, Amendment 1 contains a number of other management options including rebuilding targets and schedules, data collection provisions, catch control options, a minimum mesh size for purse seine vessels, and a seasonal area closure to protect migrating juvenile menhaden. This seasonal closure would prohibit menhaden purse seine fishing within one mile of shore from Cape Henry, Virginia to Cape Fear, North Carolina from November 1 to January 31. Finally, the amendment proposes a restructuring of the management process for Atlantic menhaden. Specifically, there are two options regarding the makeup of the management board which will oversee the management process, one retaining industry representatives on the Atlantic Menhaden Management Board, and one with no industry representation.

Copies of the Draft Amendment and the summary document can be obtained by either contacting Vanessa Jones, Administrative Assistant, at (202) 289-6400, ext. 324, or via the Commission's webpage under "Public Input" at www.asmfc.org. The public comment period extends until December 22, 2000. Written comments should be forwarded to Dr. Joseph Desfosse, Atlantic Menhaden Fishery Management Plan Coordinator, at 1444 Eye Street, NW, Sixth Floor, Washington, D.C. 20005; (202)289-6051 (fax); or comments@asmfc.org. For more information, please contact Dr. Joseph Desfosse at (202) 289-6400, ext. 329.

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NOTE TO PRESS: If you would like to receive the Commission's press releases via email or fax, please contact Tina Berger, Public Affairs & Resource Specialist, at tberger@asmfc.org or fax to (202) 289-6051.